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Filed : January 10, 2002

REMARKS

Upon entry of the foregoing amendments, Claims 23-34 and 36-47 remain pending, Claims 23, 36 37, 39 and 40 having been amended, Claim 35 having been canceled without prejudice and Claims 43-47 having been added.

Claims 23, 24, 35, 36, 39 and 41 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by Ohshita et al. (U.S. Pat. No. 5,873,428). Claims 33, 34, 37, 38 and 40 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as unpatentable in view of Ohshita et al. Claim 30 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Ohshita in view of Taig (U.S. Pat. No. 5,328,002). Claims 31 and 32 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Ohshita in view of Taig and Bedenbender (U.S. Patent No. 3,929,206). Claim 42 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Ohshita in view of Heible (U.S. Pat. No. 5,894,903). Applicants respectfully submit that the claims, as amended herein, overcome the Examiner's rejections and are in condition for allowance.

Objections to the Specification

The Examiner objected to the abstract, and specifically to the use of the term "means" in the abstract. In response, Applicants have amended the abstract to remove the use of the term "means."

The Examiner also objected to the disclosure because of the following informalities: "beginning at page 5 of the specification and continuing through the 'Disclosure of the Invention' section, reference to the claims (e.g., 'the vehicle of claim 2 is based on the same of claim 1) should be deleted from the specification." In response, Applicants have amended the "Disclosure of the Invention" section to address these informalities.

Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request that the Examiner withdraw these objections to the specification.

Rejection of the Claims under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b)

Claims 23, 24, 35, 36, 39 and 41 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by Ohshita et al. Applicants respectfully traverse the present rejections. However, in order to expedite prosecution of the present application, Applicants have amended Claims 23, 36, 37, 39, and 40 to overcome the present rejections. Applicants also expressly reserve the right to further prosecute the original versions of Claims 23, 36, 37, 39, and 40 through continuation practice.

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Ohshita discloses “a cover plate 66 [sic] affixed across the cavity 61 and [sic] a peripheral seal 67.” See col. 4, lines 38-41. As Ohshita illustrates in Figure 6, the cover plate 66 is disposed at the open end of the hub portion 41. The seal 67 is also disposed at the open end of the hub 41.

Ohshita does not disclose a cover disposed in a recess between an open end and a closed end of the hub, so that the cover is positioned inwardly from the open end of the hub. Nor does Ohshita disclose a sealing arrangement disposed in the recess inwardly from the open end of the hub.

In contrast, Claim 23 now recites, among other recitations, “a hub portion defining a recess between an open end and a closed end; a cover . . . disposed in the recess inwardly from the open end of the hub; [and] a sealing arrangement disposed in the recess inwardly from the open end of the hub.”

Applicants thus submit that Claim 23 defines over the Ohshita reference. Claims 24, 30-34, and 36-42 depend from Claim 23. Applicants submit that Claims 23, 24, 35, 36, 39 and 41 also define over Ohshita, not only because they depend from independent Claim 23, but also on their own merit.

Rejection of the Claims under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a)

Claims 33, 34, 37, 38 and 40 stand rejected as unpatentable over Ohshita et al. Applicants respectfully traverse the present rejections. However, in order to expedite prosecution of the present application, Applicants have amended Claims 23, 36, 37, 39, and 40 to overcome the present rejections. Applicants also expressly reserve the right to further prosecute the original versions of Claims 23, 36, 37, 39, and 40 through continuation practice.

As discussed above, Ohshita discloses a cover and seal disposed at the open end of the hub. See col. 4, lines 38-41; Figure 6.

Ohshita does not teach or suggest, alone or in combination, a cover disposed in a recess defined between a closed end and an open end of a hub, such that the cover is positioned inwardly from the open end. Ohshita also does not teach or suggest, alone or in combination, a sealing arrangement disposed in said recess, such that the sealing arrangement is positioned inwardly from the open end.

As noted above, Claim 23 now recites, among other recitations, “a hub portion defining a recess between an open end and a closed end; a cover . . . disposed in the recess inwardly from

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the open end of the hub; [and] a sealing arrangement disposed in the recess inwardly from the open end of the hub.”

Applicants thus submit that Claim 23 is patentable over Ohshita. Claims 33, 30-34, and 36-42 depend from independent Claim 23. Applicants submit that Claims 33, 34, 37, 38 and 40 are also patentable over Ohshita, not only because they depend from Claim 23, but also on their own merit.

Claim 30 stands rejected as unpatentable over Ohshita in view of Taig. As discussed above, Claim 23 is patentable over Ohshita, alone or in combination with other references. Claim 30 depends from Claim 23. Applicants submit that Claim 30 is patentable over Ohshita in view of Taig not only because it depends from Claim 23, but also on its own merit.

Claims 31-32 stand rejected as unpatentable over Ohshita in view of Taig and Bedenbender. As discussed above, Claim 23 is patentable over Ohshita, alone or in combination with other references. Claims 31 and 32 depend from Claim 23. Applicants submit that Claims 31-32 are patentable over Ohshita in view of Taig and Bedenbender, not only because they depend from Claim 23, but also on their own merit.

Claim 42 stands rejected as unpatentable over Ohshita in view of Heible. As discussed above, Claim 23 is patentable over Ohshita, alone or in combination with other references. Claim 42 depends from Claim 23. Applicants submit that Claim 42 is patentable over Ohshita in view of Heible, not only because it depends from Claim 23, but also on its own merit.

New Claims 55-59

Applicants have added new independent Claim 55 and dependent Claims 56-59. Claim 55 recites, among other recitations, a cover and a sealing arrangement disposed in a recess defined between an open end and a closed end of the hub, both the cover and sealing arrangement disposed away from the open end of the hub. Applicants submit that new Claims 55-59 are fully supported by the specification of the above-identified application and that no new matter has been added. Applicants also submit that new Claims 55-59 define and are non-obvious over the cited references.

CONCLUSION

For the foregoing reasons, it is respectfully submitted that the rejections set forth in the outstanding Office Action are inapplicable to the present claims and specification. Accordingly, early issuance of a Notice of Allowance is most earnestly solicited.

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The undersigned has made a good faith effort to respond to all of the rejections in the case and to place the claims in condition for immediate allowance. Nevertheless, if any undeveloped issues remain or if any issues require clarification, the Examiner is respectfully requested to call Applicant's attorney in order to resolve such issue promptly.

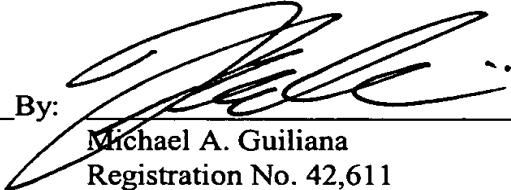
Please charge any additional fees, including any fees for additional extension of time, or credit overpayment to Deposit Account No. 11-1410.

Respectfully submitted,

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Dated: August 16, 2004

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